



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

### NOTICE OF INVESTIGATION AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

D.P.U. 20-91

December 31, 2020

Investigation by the Department of Public Utilities into (1) the Ratemaking Proposal of the Electric and Gas Companies Subject to the Department's Jurisdiction for the Treatment of Costs Related to the Financial Impacts of the State of Emergency Declared Regarding the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic and (2) Alternative Bill Payment Options for Customers.

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On August 5, 2020, the jurisdictional electric and gas distribution companies ("Distribution Companies") filed with the Department of Public Utilities ("Department") a ratemaking proposal identifying measures for the recovery of costs related to the financial impacts of the state of emergency declared regarding the novel coronavirus ("COVID-19") pandemic ("Ratemaking Proposal"). The Distribution Companies developed the Ratemaking Proposal in consultation with the Customer Assistance and Ratemaking Working Group ("Working Group") established in D.P.U. 20-58. The Ratemaking Proposal identifies areas of consensus and opposition among Working Group members.

The Department will investigate the contested cost recovery provisions of the Ratemaking Proposal to determine whether they result in just and reasonable rates for customers and whether they are consistent with the public interest. The Department will also consider proposals to expand alternative customer bill payment options, including a fee-free credit/debit card option, which is a matter that the Department most recently addressed in NSTAR Electric Company, D.P.U. 18-50 (2019) and Customer Bill Payment Alternatives for Gas and Electric Distribution Companies, D.P.U. 19-71, at 9 (2019). The Department has docketed this new investigation as D.P.U. 20-91.

The Department invites all interested persons to participate in this investigation. Any person who desires to participate in the evidentiary phase of this proceeding must file a written petition for leave to intervene or to participate in the proceeding no later than the close of business (5:00 p.m.) on **Friday, January 29, 2021**. A petition filed late may be disallowed as untimely, unless good cause is shown for waiver under 220 CMR 1.01(4). To be allowed, a petition under 220 CMR 1.03(1) must satisfy the standing requirements of G.L. c. 30A, § 10.

The Department will accept written comments on the Ratemaking Proposal. Any person who desires to comment may submit written comments no later than the close of business (5:00 p.m.) on **Wednesday, February 3, 2021**. At this time, all filings will be submitted only in electronic format in recognition of the difficulty that parties and the Department may have filing

and receiving original copies. On March 10, 2020, Governor Baker issued a state of emergency related to COVID-19 for the entire Commonwealth. Ordinarily, all parties would follow Sections B.1 and B.4 of the Department's Standard Ground Rules (D.P.U. 15-184-A, App. 1 (March 4, 2020)); however, until further notice, parties must retain the original paper version and the Department will later determine when the paper version must be filed with the Department Secretary. Importantly, all large files submitted must be broken down into electronic files that do not exceed 20 MB.

All documents submitted to the Department pursuant to this Notice must be submitted in **pdf format** by e-mail attachment to [dpu.efiling@mass.gov](mailto:dpu.efiling@mass.gov) and [rachel.cottle@mass.gov](mailto:rachel.cottle@mass.gov). The text of the e-mail must specify: (1) the docket number of the proceeding (D.P.U. 20-91); (2) the name of the person or company submitting the filing; and (3) a brief descriptive title of the document. All documents submitted in electronic format will be posted on the Department's website as soon as practicable at <http://www.mass.gov/dpu>. Importantly, all large files submitted must be broken down into electronic files that do not exceed 20 MB. A copy of any documents submitted to the Department also should be emailed to the Distribution Companies' counsel Cheryl Kimball, Esq. at [ckimball@keeganwerlin.com](mailto:ckimball@keeganwerlin.com) and John K. Habib, Esq. [jhabib@keeganwerlin.com](mailto:jhabib@keeganwerlin.com).

Due to the ongoing state of emergency, a paper copy of filings will not be available for public viewing at the Department's offices. All documents, pleadings, and filings submitted to the Department or issued by the Department related to this proceeding will be available on the Department's website: <https://eeaonline.eea.state.ma.us/DPU/Fileroom/dockets/bynumber> (enter "20-91"). To request materials in accessible formats (Braille, large print, electronic files, audio format) for people with disabilities contact Department's ADA coordinator at [DPUADACoordinator@state.ma.us](mailto:DPUADACoordinator@state.ma.us). Please direct any questions regarding this proceeding to Rachel Cottle, Hearing Officer, Department of Public Utilities at [Rachel.Cottle@mass.gov](mailto:Rachel.Cottle@mass.gov). Any person desiring further information regarding the Distribution Companies' Ratemaking Proposal should contact Cheryl Kimball, Esq. at [ckimball@keeganwerlin.com](mailto:ckimball@keeganwerlin.com) or John K. Habib, Esq. [jhabib@keeganwerlin.com](mailto:jhabib@keeganwerlin.com).